

Story and photos by Christie Vanover
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FORT RILEY, Kansas - Pfc. Michael DiMarco, Pfc. Joseph Carrillo and a dozen other 3rd Brigade soldiers who have been deployed to Kuwait for the past four months unwrapped new bundles of joy this holiday season as they saw their newborns for the first time.

Soldiers of Task Force 2nd Battalion, 70th Armored Regiment deployed to Kuwait in mid-August. As soon as DiMarco and Carrillo got their orders their pregnant wives knew they would be delivering their children without them.

"At first, I was upset because I wanted to be there for her," said DiMarco, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Bn., 70th Armored Regiment. "But I joined the Army and I've got duties. I've gotta do my job."

On Dec. 13, just four days prior to his arrival back in Kansas, Dawn gave birth to their first child, Gage.

"I called five minutes after he was born," Michael said. "I knew she was going to be in the hospital around twelve or so, so I called to see how she was doing and I was told I had a baby boy."

Dawn said they talked about what the baby was like, how he was doing and how they couldn't wait for Michael to come home.

She e-mailed photos of their son to Kuwait, but she wasn't sure if he had received them. It turned out he had received them and had been carrying them in his pocket ever since.

"I've had these close to me since the 14th, the day after he was born," DiMarco said.

Pfc. Joseph Carrillo of Company C, 1st Battalion, 41st Infantry Regiment also called his wife, Monique, from Kuwait.

"He called me while I was in labor and just kept saying 'push, push, push,' and I said, 'I am, I am, I am,'" she related.

The two had a baby boy Dec. 2 and named him Joseph, after Carrillo.

"I thank God for letting me come home

safe and I thank God for my wife," Joseph Sr. said with tears of joy. "I'm happy to see my baby."

Families like the DiMarcos and Carrillos were able to share their experiences with each other from miles away because of the communication capabilities in Kuwait.

"While we were there, we set up an Internet Café," said Maj. Robert Paquin, 2nd Bn., 70th Armored Regiment operations officer. "There were 24 computers in a tent and a dozen phone lines."

Soldiers were allowed to send e-mail back home whenever they had free time. The task force developed a website with photos and updates on the soldiers.

Paquin's wife didn't have a baby while he was deployed, but she is pregnant.

"It feels good to be back in the U.S. in a much more secure environment. There was a lot of terrorist activity while we were there," said Paquin. "We had to take extreme measures to keep our soldiers safe."

While deployed, the task force deterred regional aggression and reinforced U.S. presence to make others aware they were there to protect Kuwait.

According to Paquin, the Army has conducted Intrinsic Action since the mid-1990s, and "this was the best Intrinsic Action the Army has done."

Maj. Gen. Robert St. Onge, Jr., commander of the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) at Fort Riley, agreed that they did a superb job.

"Every general officer who went to Kuwait has written a letter to me personally about your efforts," he said, as he welcomed the soldiers home. "You are the best Operation Desert Spring or Intrinsic Action they have ever witnessed."

The approximate 1,200 soldiers who deployed returned in time for Christmas.

"This will be our first Christmas together," said Dawn DiMarco. "I'm glad he'll be home for it. We got our whole Christmas bundle right here."

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- Dawn DiMarco

There's no place like home

returns to Kansas

TF 2-70



Above: Pfc. Joseph Carrillo sweeps his wife, Monique, and newborn son, Joseph Jr., into his arms, hugging them tightly.

Below: Pfc. Michael DiMarco tenderly holds his tearful wife, Dawn, and gazes down upon his newborn son, Gage. Both soldiers were deployed to Kuwait as part of Task Force 2-70. During the homecoming ceremonies at Ft. Riley, Kansas, both soldiers were greeted by their new little bundles of joy.

